

The Journey Of Life, A Flowing River

Talk: Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Human life can be likened to a flowing river. What is a river? A river is a unique phenomenon of nature. In the river fresh water is being added to the existing water at every moment. This everyday phenomenon is responsible for the freshness of the river water. In the absence of this continuous flow of newly added water, the river will lose its freshness: it will not be able to maintain its health-giving, even life-giving, properties.

The same method is adopted by nature with regard to human beings. As we know, human beings continue to be born, generation after generation. Within a period of a hundred years, the previous generation is replaced by a fresh set of people. If the old water is replaced with fresh water, in human beings this same occurrence takes place in the form of previous generations yielding place to new generations.

A great wisdom lies behind this system set up in human life by nature. Its aim is that the coming generation should learn its lesson from the experiences of the previous generation. By benefiting in this way, we may continue our life journey in a far better way. This is the precious gift of the previous generation to the new generation. This is why the phrase 'old is gold' is often used with reference to the older generation.

For instance, a father sees that his son is intelligent but finds that there is one thing wrong with his temperament, and that is his overconfidence. Due to this he suffers losses in life. On seeing this, the father, in the light of his own experiences advises him thus:

"My son, confidence is good, but overconfidence is bad."

This advice is very useful to him.

Similarly, another parent, a mother, sees that her son is impatient.

He cannot wait for anything to take place in the ordinary course of events, so she gives him advice, with reference to her own experiences:

"My son, life is 1 per cent action, and 99 per cent restraint."

This advice proves very useful to the son.

Similarly, another parent finds that his daughter does not have the quality of perseverance. She is not able to work unflaggingly with others, therefore, in the light of his experiences he advises his daughter:

"My child, maturity is the ability to live with things you cannot change."

This advice of the father gives the daughter right guidance. She reviews her actions, and replans her life and then achieves great success in life.

These examples show how important the previous generation is for the new generation. The

previous generation bequeaths its wisdom to the new generation. It passes on such formulae as have proved right in the light of practical experiences. In this way the older generation enables the coming generation to refrain from committing the mistakes which people made earlier that led to great losses. The truth is the previous generation is a valuable gift of nature to the present generation.

If our life is like flowing water, in which fresh water continues to be added at every moment, then it will always remain fresh and will never become stale. On the contrary, water that is confined to a closed space, stagnating in the absence of replenishment, will eventually lose its freshness. It will become stale, even harmful. The flowing river is a healthy message given by nature and the experience of many generations of people across continents and cultures would support this analogy.

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